2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
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instance, 'Did you hoe over there this morning?' (*Bushye mwa*lima*po lucelo?*) only to be answered with an emphatic denial, 'No I was hoeing there for my chief' (*Nakarya! Na*limina*po mfumu*).

The people seem perfectly conscious that legal obligations can be fulfilled by work and reckon up their services as concretely as we do debts in money, although of course with less exactitude. A man with a grievance against a relative was heard saying, 'He refused me porridge! I who bicycled three times to the river to sell his fish!' and such statements are quite common. In legal cases where there is a dispute, probably between the father and the maternal uncle over the guardianship of children, one or other of the disputants will nearly always mention at some time or other the number of times he has cut trees for the mother of the children, or hoed for her, and such service gives legal claims just as the payment of money or provision of food.

Naturally there is a distinction between near and distant relatives in this matter. Though all the members of a family who cook and eat together are supposed to do their share of the work, a close relation will be fed whether he pulls his weight or not. A young son-in-law may lose his bride if he is incorrigibly lazy, as we have seen, but within the lineage group a wastrel is accepted as one of the inevitable crosses of life and endured with more resignation than in our society:[1] but a more distant relative within the classificatory degree only could not be sure of such tolerance, and would have to claim his place in the group and his right to food by the work he did. In such cases the distinction between the co-operating kinsman and the temporary labourer is a fine one.[2] Even adolescent boys and girls recognize quite clearly those relatives who will feed them whatever they do, and those from whom they have to earn their keep. I have a number of cases illustrating this fact. For instance a girl of 14, found grinding alone late in the afternoon outside the house of a classificatory mother instead of her own grandmother with whom she usually lived, answered,

[1] 'Why do you make a garden for your sister when she has a husband sitting round doing nothing?' I asked a man once. 'Because that is his habit (*musango uakwe*) to go on sitting like that,' was the answer with a shrug. 'My sister likes that man. She refuses any other. First we scolded him and then we left it. We said, "Let it be! (*Cibe!*) That is his habit." '

[2] Urban natives who employ servants tend to engage their own kinsmen and to incorporate them in their household group, but a distant relative would have short shrift if he did not work, while a near one would probably still be supported.

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